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ABSTRACT

This report examines the mobility of migrant secondary students and the frequency with which selected information actually appears on the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) records of secondary students. Additionally, the report considers migrant students who are at or below grade level. The report is based upon data from the MSRTS databank. Currently migrant students changed schools across district lines during a regular school term; but more than 34% did so in summer term. Across grade levels 9-12 there was secondary credit activity on nearly 66% of currently and about 33% of formerly migrantory students in the MSRTS database. In general, the MSRTS has updated greater proportions of regular term information than it has in regard to summer term information. Secondary credit activity was proportionately greater for currently versus formerly migratory students. Twenty-two percent of migrant students moving between districts carried full or partial credit on the MSRTS records. Being overage in grade is a key indicator for identifying students at risk of dropping out. Fifty percent of migrant students grade 7-12 are on grade level, but 32.8% are one year and 17.1% two years or more below grade level. Some brief comments are made regarding the operation of the MSRTS program. (DHP)

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# MESA NATIONAL MSRTS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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# MESA NATIONAL MSRTS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The information reported herein was prepared pursuant to a contract with the United States Department of Education. However, the opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the Department of Education should be inferred.

# PREFACE

This report is a combination of analysis and thoughts of several individuals on the Migrant Student Record Transfer System data that were requested of the Migrant Education Secondary Assistance (MESA) project to examine characteristics of the secondary migrant youth. The bulk of the analysis and the preparation of the report are due to Dr. Gerald Richardson, Supervisor of Management and Evaluation Services, Bureau of Compensatory Education, Florida Department of Education. Dr. Richardson is to be commended for not only analyzing the data but for his patience in providing invaluable education to the MESA staff in understanding the MSRTS information. Ms. Gay Villarreal, Director, Villarreal Analytical Management and Organizational Services (VAMOS) of San Marcos, Texas, also analyzed the data in preparation of the Interstate Secondary Credit Accrual and Acceptance Manual for the MESA project. Some of her comments are included in this document as well.

In preparation of the final products for submission as a result of this MESA contract, Ms. Susan Morse, Interstate Migrant Consultant, and Ms. Lila Shapiro, Migrant Education Consultant and former Program Specialist with the United States Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, provided their input into this document.

The staff of the MESA project, namely, Ms. Mary Fink and Ms. Anne Salerno, Migrant Education Specialists, also spent many hours studying the data and interpreting the information.

The data appear to have some significant considerations for Migrant Education. For example, the need for more extensive identification and recruitment primarily during the summer is well documented by looking at the differences in numbers served during regular and summer terms. What are the implications for increased programming during summer months? From the data analyzed, there appear to be relatively few updates on the MSRTS secondary portion of the record in comparison to student enrollments. What does this imply in regards to mobility issues and migrant students' chances for timely graduation? The data also appear to support previous research findings that at least fifty percent of migrant youth are overage for their grade placement. What are the implications for changing policy in regards to retention?

To each of the individuals that labored over these data - many thanks!

Robert Lynch
Director
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# MESA National MSRTS Executive Summary

This report is based upon two data sets provided for the Migrant Education Secondary Assistance (MESA) Project by the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) data bank in Little Rock, Arkansas. The first report was run on November 16, 1988, the second on January 31, 1989. Both reports examine various characteristics of migrant secondary students and the degree to which their MSRTS Educational Records were updated with Secondary Credit Data sometime during the 1987-88 school year.

The purpose of this report is to analyze recent MSRTS data in support of improved services to migrant secondary students. The report has been organized into three parts which correspond to the data made available for analysis and the major areas of interest to the MESA project.

**Part I** deals with mobility of migrant secondary students who are often perceived as moving from one location to another with frequent interruptions in their schooling. Is this an accurate perception?

**Part II** examines the frequency with which selected information actually appears on the MSRTS records of secondary students. To some extent, this section assesses the current usage of the secondary portion of the MSRTS record.

**Part III** stands apart as a capsule needs assessment as to the amount of risk which today's migrant students face in terms of their potential for dropping out of school. The primary indicator is overage enrollments for grades 7-12.

## I. SECONDARY STUDENT ENROLLMENT TRENDS AND MOBILITY INDICATORS

A key step toward improving services to migrant secondary students is that of gaining a better understanding of their school enrollment and mobility patterns. How many students are enrolled in grades 9-12? How many students "moved" during the 1987-88 reporting period? Which moves actually constituted school interruptions that might adversely affect high school completion? Answers to these and related questions may reveal effective practices as well as needs for improved services.

A. Number of Migrant Secondary Students Enrolled (Gr 9-12)

Table 1a: Secondary Enrollments by School Term (1987-88) and Migrant Status

| School Term | Current Status Number | (Pct) | Former Status Number | (Pct) | Total Number | (Pct) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regular | 34,441 | (40%) | 52,282 | (60%) | 86,723 | (100%) |
| Summer | 6,416 | (38%) | 10,460 | (62%) | 16,876 | (100%) |

-- The total national volume of secondary students enrolled in the regular term of school year 1987-88 was nearly 87,000. The total number enrolled in the summer term was about 17,000. Thus, regular term enrollments were more than five (5) times greater than summer term enrollments.

-- The proportions of current and former migrants enrolled were nearly the same in both terms, about 40% currents and 60% formers.

Considerations:

The summer enrollment is less than 20% of that shown for the regular term. This may indicate a need for improved summer identification and recruitment and more summer programs.

B. School Interruptions

Table 1b: Number and Type of School Enrollments by Term and Migrant Status

| Type of Enrollment | Regular School Term | | Summer School Term | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Migrant Status | | | |
| | Current Number (Pct) | Former Number (Pct) | Current Number (Pct) | Former Number (Pct) |
| Single school enrollment | 23,093 (67.1%) | 42,025 (80.4%) | 1,705 (26.6%) | 1,337 (12.8%) |
| Two or more school enrollments (Same School District) | 4,902 (14.2%) | 8,135 (15.6%) | 2,503 (39.0%) | 7,850 (75.1%) |
| Two or more school enrollments (Different School District) | 6,446 (18.7%) | 2,122 (4.1%) | 2,208 (34.4%) | 1,267 (12.1%) |

Regular Term

-- For two-thirds of currently migratory secondary students, MSRTS data reflected one school enrollment during the regular school term. Another 14% showed school changes within the same school district. Nineteen percent of the records indicated a change of schools across district lines.

-- Records of former migrant students showed fewer school transfers. Eighty percent had one regular term school enrollment. Nearly 16% changed schools within the same district. Four percent of former migrants changed schools across district boundaries.

Summer Term

-- About 27% of currently migratory secondary students had a single school enrollment; 39% changed schools within the same district; 34% changed schools across district boundaries.

-- Thirteen percent of former migratory students had a single school enrollment; 75% changed schools within the same district; 12% changed schools across district boundaries.

-- The data suggest that school transfers occur proportionately more often in the summer term.

Considerations:

An assumption in the quest for improved services to secondary students is that full implementation of the secondary portion of the MSRTS record is necessary to overcome the problem of school-to-school transfers. This assumption may be examined by looking at the actual numbers of migrants, especially those of current status, who changed schools during a recent enrollment period. Of special interest are those students who change school districts and may be regarded as having a compelling need for a supplementary information transfer system.

The assumption of frequent school-to-school transfers among migrant students is not well supported by these recent enrollment data.

These data do not cite student enrollment and attendance; therefore students who entered late and/or withdrew early but whose records did not show enrollment in another school are not counted. In addition, in this report, inter/intrastate moves that took place between regular and summer programs were not recorded as transfers. Also, moves to non-project areas were not recorded.

The rate of mobility referred to above may indicate that parents are trying to adjust their schedules to allow students to finish the semester and earn credits to graduate.

## II. Prevalence of MSRTS Secondary Information

If records are generally equipped with pertinent information, that in itself would suggest their usefulness. Therefore, the second part of this report attempts to examine the extent to which data are being put into MSRTS secondary records.

### A. Secondary Credit Adds/Updates and Designated High School of Graduation

One feature of the secondary section of MSRTS is the record of secondary credits earned during a student's schooling experience. This facilitates more continuity in required credit accumulation toward a high school diploma. Also important is the designation of a particular school from which the student plans to graduate.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of secondary credit information on the MSRTS records of students in grades 9-12. These data reflect information which was added or updated during the 1987-88 school year. Percents are percents of the total number of students enrolled in grades 9-12 in each of four enrollment categories (school term by migrant status). Also reported is the frequency with which the Designated High School of Graduation has been noted on MSRTS records.

Table 2: Number and Percent
of Secondary Credit Adds/Updates
and Designated High School Of
Graduation by Term and Migrant Status

| | Regular School Term | | Summer School Term | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Migrant Status | | | |
| | Current Number (Pct) | Former Number (Pct) | Current Number (Pct) | Former Number (Pct) |
| 9th grade | 8,913 (25.9%) | 5,843 (11.2%) | 533 ( 8.3%) | 315 ( 3.0%) |
| 10th grade | 6,310 (18.3%) | 5,143 ( 9.8%) | 478 ( 7.5%) | 386 ( 3.7%) |
| 11th grade | 4,461 (13.0%) | 4,052 ( 7.8%) | 395 ( 6.2%) | 412 ( 3.9%) |
| 12th grade | 3,053 ( 8.9%) | 3,049 ( 5.8%) | 139 ( 2.2%) | 166 ( 1.6%) |
| Total 9-12 | 22,705 (65.9%) | 18,077 (34.6%) | 1,545 (24.1%) | 1,279 (12.2%) |
| Designated High School | 21,123 (61.3%) | 23,868 (45.7%) | 3,441 (53.6%) | 5,417 (51.8%) |

-- Across grade levels 9-12, there was secondary credit activity on nearly 2/3 of currents and about 1/3 of formers enrolled during the regular term. Summer term activity was noted on about 1/4 of currents and 1/8 of formers enrolled.

-- Secondary credit coverage by individual grade level varies considerably; however, there is no way to estimate the adequacy of coverage, since individual grade level enrollments were not requested in the MSRTS data.

-- In general, the proportions of regular term information additions or updates are much greater than those occurring during the summer term. Likewise, secondary credit activity was proportionately greater for current versus former migratory students. These trends are consistent whether viewed by individual grade level or the total volume of activity, 9-12.

-- At 61% coverage for regular term currents (46% for formers) and 54% coverage for summer term currents (52% for formers), Designated High School of Graduation is one of the most consistently recorded data elements on the MSRTS secondary record.

**B. Full and Partial Credit for Students Whose Schooling Was Interrupted**

Table 3 provides a breakdown of the number of students in grades 9-12 who transferred to another school district during the reporting period with full and partial credit on their MSRTS records. Percents shown in the display are based on the total number who moved to different school districts by enrollment category. This analysis amplifies the previous display of overall credit adds/updates by focusing in on students who could likely benefit the most from information conveyed in their supplementary records -- those with multiple enrollments between school districts.

Table 3: Number and Percent of Students With Full and Partial Credit on Their MSRTS Records

| Credit | Regular School Term | | Summer School Term | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Migrant Status | | | |
| | Current Number (Pct) | Former Number (Pct) | Current Number (Pct) | Former Number (Pct) |
| Full Credit on MSRTS | 1,391 (21.6%) | 204 (9.6%) | 2 (0.1%) | 1 (0.1%) |
| Partial Credit on MSRTS | 1,390 (21.6%) | 92 (4.3%) | 6 (0.3%) | 0 (0.0%) |

These percentages are based on students with two or more school enrollments. See Table 1b.

-- Twenty-two percent of currently migrant students who changed school districts during the regular term of 1987-88 carried full or partial credit on their MSRTS records.

-- The presence of full or partial credit information for summer term students who attended two or more schools during summer was almost non-existent.

-- It would appear that either the records of students who could benefit the most are not being adequately attended to or such students do not stay in any one place long enough to accumulate full or partial credit.

Consideration:

The use of state credit exchange forms instead of MSRTS records between sending and receiving states may influence these data. These summer-earned credits may ultimately be recorded on the MSRTS during regular term in the home base state.

C. Other MSRTS Data Elements and Combinations of Information

Table 4: Number and Percent of Students With Various Combinations of Information on Their MSRTS Records

| Regular School Term | | | | Summer School Term | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Migrant Status | | | | | | | |
| Current | | Former | | Current | | Former | |
| Number | (Pct) | Number | (Pct) | Number | (Pct) | Number | (Pct) |
| All Enrollments | | | | | | | |
| Language for Instruction | | | | | | | |
| 3,623 | (10.5%) | 5,770 | (11.0%) | 435 | (6.8%) | 202 | (1.9%) |
| Special Education Information | | | | | | | |
| 1,074 | (3.1%) | 1,082 | (2.1%) | 3 | --- | 11 | (0.1%) |
| Credit and Language | | | | | | | |
| 2,875 | (8.3%) | 4,083 | (7.8%) | 168 | (2.6%) | 30 | (0.3%) |
| Credit and Special Education Information | | | | | | | |
| 973 | (2.8%) | 568 | (1.1%) | 0 | --- | 2 | --- |
| Multiple District Enrollments | | | | | | | |
| Credit and Language | | | | | | | |
| 316 | (4.3%) | 51 | (2.4%) | 6 | (0.3%) | 0 | --- |
| Credit and Special Education Information | | | | | | | |
| 56 | (0.9%) | 6 | (0.3%) | 0 | --- | 0 | --- |

Percentages refer to Table 1a.

Considering all secondary enrollments:

-- Language for instruction appear on the records of about 11% of regular term students and considerably fewer summer term students.

-- Special education information is less prevalent; however, there is no way to gauge the adequacy of coverage given the data available. Since states have varying methods of classifying special educational needs, it is not possible to compare percentages of migrant secondary students showing special education information on their records with a national special education percentage.

Considering just those secondary students with multiple district enrollments:

-- Combinations of credit and language for instruction or special education are negligible.

## III. Below Grade Level Enrollments

Being overage in grade is a key indicator for identifying students at risk of dropping out of school. Students who have fallen behind their age similar classmates are prone toward lack of motivation for schooling, poor academic performance, and behavioral infractions. The further behind students fall, the more likely the negative consequences, the less likely they are to obtain at least the minimum educational credential of high school completion.

The data in Table represent a rare opportunity to gauge the severity of opout risk among migrant students throughout the country. In these particular displays students' grade level upon enrollment was compared to their age as of the beginning of the 1987-88 school year. Using federal guidelines which set forth age in grade expectancy, students were subsequently categorized as being (1) at least one year, but less than two years below expected grade level, (2) two or more years below expected grade level, with (3) the remainder being less than one year older than their expected age for the particular grade level enrollment.

Table 5: Age/Grade Level Enrollments for Migrant Students in Grades 7-12

| Regular School Term | | Summer School Term | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Migrant Status | | | |
| Current Number (Pct) | Former Number (Pct) | Current Number (Pct) | Former Number (Pct) |
| **Grades 7-8** | | | |
| On Grade Level | | | |
| 14,537 (50.0%) | 19,735 (54.0%) | 3,324 (60.6%) | 5,447 (66.5%) |
| One Year Below Grade Level | | | |
| 9,800 (33.7%) | 11,650 (31.8%) | 1,386 (25.3%) | 2,127 (26.0%) |
| Two or More Years Below | | | |
| 4,738 (16.3%) | 5,196 (14.2%) | 779 (14.2%) | 613 (7.5%) |
| Total Enrolled | | | |
| 29,075 (100%) | 36,581 (100%) | 5,489 (100%) | 8,187 (100%) |
| **Grades 9-12** | | | |
| On Grade Level | | | |
| 17,276 (50.2%) | 28,780 (55.0%) | 3,818 (59.5%) | 7,093 (67.8%) |
| One Year Below Grade Level | | | |
| 11,032 (32.0%) | 16,277 (31.1%) | 1,650 (25.7%) | 2,435 (23.3%) |
| Two or More Years Below | | | |
| 6,133 (17.8%) | 7,225 (13.8%) | 948 (14.8%) | 932 (8.9%) |
| Total Enrolled | | | |
| 34,441 (100%) | 52,282 (100%) | 6,416 (100%) | 10,460 (100%) |
| **Total Grades 7-12** | | | |
| On Grade Level | | | |
| 31,813 (50.1%) | 48,515 (54.6%) | 7,142 (60.0%) | 12,540 (67.3%) |
| One Year Below Grade Level | | | |
| 20,832 (32.8%) | 27,927 (31.4%) | 3,036 (25.5%) | 4,562 (24.5%) |
| Two or More Years Below | | | |
| 10,871 (17.1%) | 12,421 (14.0%) | 1,727 (14.5%) | 1,545 (8.3%) |
| Total Enrolled | | | |
| 63,516 (100%) | 88,863 (100%) | 11,905 (100%) | 18,647 (100%) |

-- Students in the two grade levels, 7 and 8, account for disproportionately more students than those enrolled in the four grade levels, 9 through 12, reflecting the high dropout rate at the secondary level.

-- There are negligible differences in age/grade placement proportions between students grades 7-8 versus 9-12.

-- Students enrolling in the summer term tend to be consistently at lower risk (more on grade level enrollments, fewer below grade enrollments) than those enrolled only in the regular term.

-- Currently migratory students tend to be consistently at higher risk than formers.

-- Considering all students in grades 7-12, 1/2 of regular term currents appear to be on grade level (55% for formers).

Consideration:

The data on Table 5 are significant because of the research indicating that students one year behind have a 50% chance of dropping out and those two or more years behind have a 90% chance of dropping out.